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Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1999 Provincial Enumeration

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September 2000

The Honourable Bill Hartley
Speaker of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament Buildings
Victoria, British Columbia
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Honourable Speaker:

Section 42 of the *Election Act* requires the Chief Electoral Officer to conduct a general enumeration starting on the first Monday in May during the 3rd calendar year after the last general election.

I have the honour to submit the Report of the Chief Electoral Officer on the 1999 Provincial Enumeration.

This report includes a summary of the enumeration, voter record transactions performed, and enumeration costs.

Respectfully submitted,

RA Patterson

Robert A. Patterson
Chief Electoral Officer

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Introduction

General enumerations are required by section 42 of the *Election Act* in the third calendar year after a general election. An enumeration may be by a door-to-door visitation or by another method authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer. The 1999 enumeration was conducted as a phased series of mailings because door-to-door enumerations are not as efficient as they once were.

Access to voters' residences has become increasingly problematic. Changing lifestyles, large numbers of voters away from their homes for work-related reasons, and individual concerns for privacy and safety have made it less likely that enumerators will find someone at home.

In many areas it is difficult to recruit sufficient or reliable enumerators willing to learn complex procedures for two weeks' work. Many are reluctant to enumerate door-to-door out of fear for their personal safety. In rural and remote areas, enumerators have frequently commented that their compensation was inadequate for the cost of travel and the amount of time required to visit widely separated residences.

The quality of work provided by enumerators had also become an increasing problem. In the compressed period required for a door-to door enumeration, it is very difficult to ensure quality control measures are followed with respect to completeness and accuracy. Computerization has demanded that data input standards be maintained, however, poor quality source documents cause significant internal data integrity problems.

Following every door-to-door enumeration this office has heard concerns that certain areas in major urban centres are left unenumerated, that certain categories of voters are not adequately registered - the homeless, the hearing impaired, new Canadians, and voters whose occupations require frequent absence from their residences - and that the enumeration process is simply "not working" as it should or as it did in the past.

Finally, an enumeration is a very costly undertaking. From previous enumeration results, at least 60% of those contacted would simply be confirmed as still residing at the same address, which leaves only an anticipated 800,000 actual updates and new registrations. The cost of performing a door-to-door enumeration in the Spring of 1999 was projected to be $14 million, or $17.50 for each update to the Voters List.

For these reasons it was determined that a postal enumeration was the most cost-efficient method of canvassing the British Columbia electorate.

Preparation

As stated in my 1998 Annual Report, with one in four people moving every year, an accumulation of inactive voter records can result from unreported residential moves. To begin the preparations for this enumeration, a program was undertaken in 1998 to purge the Voters List of inactive voter records so that we did not attempt to contact voters at addresses at which we were confident they were no longer resident.

A mail campaign was conducted to target approximately 240,000 voters whose records indicated they had not voted in the last two elections and that no address change or confirmation activity had taken place since the 1996 general election. Approximately 37,000 of these voters confirmed their voter records; in July, the remaining 200,000-plus records were purged from the Voters List pursuant to section 46 of the *Election Act*.

By comparing information in our Voters List data base with residential address information from Elections Canada, we identified approximately 192,000 residential addresses where there were no voters registered. A pre-enumeration mailing to those addresses was supported by a print and broadcast advertising campaign at the end of March 1999, inviting all voters to call our toll-free line to update or confirm their voter registration data. Approximately 42,000 updates to the provincial Voters List, including 24,000 new voters, were generated as a result of this mailing.

Enumeration

The enumeration phase commenced on the first Monday in May 1999, by sending enumeration packages to the 1.5 million registered voters who had not confirmed or updated their registration data since April 1998. The enumeration packages asked each voter to confirm or update their voter registration information. Packages were sent in eight regional mailings between May and the end of June.

Voters whose information was up-to-date could confirm their voter registration simply by signing and returning a confirmation card in the postage-paid envelope provided. Voters needing to update their name or address information could do so by returning a completed registration card, and unregistered voters could use the registration card provided to have their name added to the Voters List. A toll-free

telephone service with extended hours was available and voters could confirm or update their address information by calling the toll-free number. Registration inquiries and updates were also generated through the Elections BC Website (www.elections.bc.ca) and by electronic mail from voters. Almost one million voters have registered, confirmed or updated their voter registration since the mailing of the enumeration packages in May 1999.

Conclusion

In October 1999 Elections BC mailed 1.3 million voter registration confirmation cards to those voters who had responded to their enumeration package or had otherwise registered, confirmed or updated their registration information since April 1998. In subsequent mailings to date, voter registration confirmation cards have been issued to an additional 550,000 registered voters. Cards were not sent to voters whose records had not been updated in the last 18 months. A second mailing of registration confirmation cards will take place early in 2000.

The overall cost of the 1999 enumeration was $4 million. This is a dramatic reduction from the anticipated costs if a door-to-door enumeration had been conducted. The cost per voter record update was $4.00, compared to a projected cost of $17.50 per update for a door-to-door campaign.

Voter Record Counts

ED Code	ED Name	April 17/99 (Before)	Voter Records Transactions	November 08/99 (After)	Difference Between Before and After
ABB	Abbotsford	26,929	10,549	28,038	1,109
ALB	Alberni	17,468	5,542	17,407	(61)
BVS	Bulkley Valley-Stikine	15,967	8,975	15,844	(123)
BYE	Burnaby-Edmonds	26,311	8,317	26,485	174
BYN	Burnaby North	23,614	7,063	23,669	55
BYW	Burnaby-Willingdon	27,728	8,744	27,523	(205)
CBN	Cariboo North	17,179	8,381	17,419	240
CBS	Cariboo South	19,127	8,387	19,222	95
CHK	Chilliwack	31,850	12,206	33,045	1,195
CLR	Columbia River-Revelstoke	18,280	10,042	18,337	57
CMX	Comox Valley	39,231	15,220	40,168	937
CQM	Coquitlam-Maillardville	28,435	8,327	28,291	(144)
CWL	Cowichan-Ladysmith	30,325	16,356	30,596	271
DLN	Delta North	24,234	6,385	24,050	(184)
DLS	Delta South	28,241	8,394	28,579	338
ESM	Esquimalt-Metchosin	30,070	10,429	30,567	497
FTL	Fort Langley-Aldergrove	31,553	11,980	32,645	1,092
KAM	Kamloops	29,609	10,651	30,314	705
KAT	Kamloops-North Thompson	21,376	8,736	22,016	640
KTY	Kootenay	21,439	10,681	21,853	414
LLY	Langley	24,686	8,550	25,183	497
MJF	Malahat-Juan De Fuca	27,726	11,459	28,448	722
MPR	Maple Ridge-Pitt Meadows	35,654	12,733	37,030	1,376
MSI	Matsqui	26,808	11,159	27,640	832
MSS	Mission-Kent	23,427	8,017	23,706	279
NAN	Nanaimo	29,606	11,211	29,929	323
NEL	Nelson-Creston	24,980	13,422	25,122	142
NEW	New Westminster	27,965	9,925	28,321	356
NOC	North Coast	14,767	4,769	14,399	(368)
NOI	North Island	22,892	9,360	22,638	(254)
NVL	North Vancouver-Lonsdale	24,800	8,746	24,912	112
NVS	North Vancouver-Seymour	29,686	9,089	29,949	263
OBG	Oak Bay-Gordon Head	30,601	9,819	30,787	186
OKB	Okanagan-Boundary	22,378	9,159	22,608	230
OKE	Okanagan-East	31,594	12,424	32,803	1,209
OKP	Okanagan-Penticton	30,304	12,785	31,077	773
OKV	Okanagan-Vernon	32,004	13,457	33,013	1,009
OKW	Okanagan-West	44,091	17,384	46,244	2,153
PAR	Parksville-Qualicum	44,294	13,250	44,604	310
PCN	Peace River North	15,722	7,497	16,067	345
PCS	Peace River South	16,405	5,910	16,361	(44)
PCT	Port Coquitlam	40,207	13,792	41,538	1,331
PMB	Port Moody-Burnaby Mountain	28,054	9,278	28,540	486
POR	Powell River-Sunshine Coast	27,474	19,578	27,847	373
PRM	Prince George-Mount Robson	15,748	5,649	15,786	38
PRN	Prince George North	19,678	6,334	19,894	216
PRO	Prince George-Omineca	20,004	7,472	20,331	327
RCC	Richmond Centre	22,924	7,638	23,328	404
RCE	Richmond East	22,733	6,657	22,671	(62)
RCS	Richmond-Steveston	20,629	5,943	21,012	383
RST	Rossland-Trail	20,429	6,722	20,575	146
SAN	Saanich North and the Islands	33,725	21,204	34,487	762
SAS	Saanich South	29,147	9,655	29,655	508
SHU	Shuswap	31,781	20,851	32,411	630
SKN	Skeena	16,846	9,099	16,837	(9)
SRC	Surrey-Cloverdale	38,364	13,873	40,252	1,888
SRG	Surrey-Green Timbers	26,169	8,158	26,171	2
SRN	Surrey-Newton	37,225	12,237	37,918	693
SRW	Surrey-Whalley	19,252	5,929	19,169	(83)
SWR	Surrey-White Rock	35,847	12,150	37,085	1,238

(more)

Voter Record Counts (continued)

ED Code	ED Name	April 17/99 (Before)	Voter Records Transactions	November 08/99 (After)	Difference Between Before and After
VBU	Vancouver-Burrard	29,660	12,523	31,085	1,425
VFV	Vancouver-Fraserview	23,074	6,208	22,926	(148)
VHA	Vancouver-Hastings	23,316	6,691	23,127	(189)
VKE	Vancouver-Kensington	23,159	6,119	22,860	(299)
VKI	Vancouver-Kingsway	23,386	6,426	22,945	(441)
VLA	Vancouver-Langara	22,927	6,471	22,700	(227)
VLM	Vancouver-Little Mountain	30,568	10,765	30,935	367
VMP	Vancouver-Mount Pleasant	24,013	7,395	23,884	(129)
VPG	Vancouver-Point Grey	32,238	11,077	31,969	(269)
VQL	Vancouver-Quilchena	25,068	7,685	25,479	411
VTB	Victoria-Beacon Hill	29,769	11,246	29,812	43
VTH	Victoria-Hillside	28,052	10,985	28,620	568
WCP	West Vancouver-Capilano	27,237	8,592	27,476	239
WGA	West Vancouver-Garibaldi	27,720	10,575	28,154	434
YAL	Yale-Lillooet	21,308	17,831	21,389	81
Total		**1,987,087**	**758,298**	**2,015,777**	**28,690**

Voter Record Transactions

The transaction activity in the provincial Voters List data base cannot be directly translated into the final number of registered voters. For example, a change of name is recorded as an 'Add' (the new name) and a 'Delete' (the former name) to the data base, but this activity does not add a new voter to the Voters List.

The transaction figures shown include: "Adds", which are the number of new voters entered into the Voters List system; "Deletes", which are the number of voter records which were removed from the system; and "Changes", which reflect transactions for voters who have changed addresses within an electoral district and for voters changing addresses between electoral districts. (To eliminate double counting, for a move from one district to another, the computer system records a change for the district into which the voter has moved.)

Enumeration Costs

	$
Salaries	824,491
Travel	7,929
Professional Services	874
Information Technology	610,414
Office Expenses	12,741
Printing	799,841
Postal Services	1,624,559
Statutory Advertising	123,154
Short Term Rentals	1,700
Total	**$4,005,703**